

Press Release

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EU Parliament introduces improvements to pharma package without going full mile for consumers

The EU Parliament has proposed some positive changes to the pharma package, the EU's largest reform of pharmaceutical legislation in twenty years, but these are unlikely to go far enough to significantly improve people's access to medicines.

Monique Goyens, Director General of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), said: "Consumers and patients face a worrying trend of rising medicine prices and increasingly common shortages. With health spending projected to rise faster than GDP, states increasingly face difficult decisions about which medicines to reimburse and which costs will ultimately have to be footed by the patient. The EU must address these growing problems through its pharma reform package. While the Parliament has brought some positive changes, it's doubtful these go far enough to bring about the meaningful change consumers need.

"On the one hand, it is encouraging that the Parliament supports requirements for pharma companies to draw up shortage prevention plans for all medicines and to publish the reasons behind an eventual shortage. To date, pharma companies get away with having to explain so little for so much.

"What is a shame is that the Parliament has failed to shorten the period during which a new medicine is protected from competition. Shortening this period would have helped make medicine prices more affordable by allowing cheaper, generic medicines reach the market earlier."

The next step is for EU Member States to adopt their position before the negotiations between the EU institutions take place to reach a final deal. This is not likely to happen before next year given the EU Parliament elections in June and the change of Commission in autumn.